



# Problem Properties Task Force

9/1/2012

First Annual Report

Photo: "Absentee Landlords," Boston Magazine, October 2011



**Cover: 30 Ridgewood in August 2011  
immediately following designation**



**Above: 30 Ridgewood a year later in  
August 2012**





# Problem Properties Task Force

*First Annual Report - September 1<sup>st</sup> 2012*

## Introduction from Mayor Thomas M. Menino



One year ago, stemming from the alarming number of City resources being used on a small group of problematic properties, I created the Problem Properties Task Force by Executive Order. This interdepartmental group is charged with assessing and addressing problem properties and their owners, ensuring a positive quality of life is provided for all residents of the City of Boston.

So far, the Task Force has investigated 144 properties, 18 of which had the most egregious issues and were officially designated “Problem Properties.” In investigating these problematic residences (and businesses) we have seen a 55% reduction in police calls for service at these addresses and resolved a large number of sanitary and building code violations that were a blight to the neighborhood.

The attached report includes dramatic before and after stories of our successes, evidence that the Task Force has had a serious impact on the quality of life issues perpetuated by these properties. The report details how the City has been able to respond to the unique situations at each property identified - whether this is through increased police presence, housing court intervention, or a human services based response. The effects of the task force reach well beyond the designated properties. In many cases we have seen owners proactively resolve issues at their residences and businesses because of the Task Force’s attention at nearby properties.

The Task Force looks forward to a successful second year while continuing to build open our data-driven approach to resolving issues identified by the community, the Office of Neighborhood Services, and data sets from ISD, BPD, BFD, and our 24 Hour Hotline. Through our focus on data we hope to be able to proactively predict where problem properties are likely to occur and intervene before complaints are made.

I am proud to report that the Problem Properties Task Force has had a very positive effect on the neighborhoods of our great city.

Sincerely,  
Mayor Thomas M. Menino

## Task Force Members:

**Michael Kineavy** (Chair), Chief of Policy and Planning

**Ed Davis**, Police Commissioner

**Barbara Ferrer**, Commissioner of Public Health

**Rod Fraser**, Fire Commissioner

**Evelyn Friedman**, Director of Neighborhood Development

**Bryan Glascock**, Acting Commissioner of Inspectional Services

**Justin Holmes**, Director of Constituent Engagement

**Dan Linskey**, Superintendent-in-Chief, Boston Police Department

**Bill McGonagle**, Boston Housing Authority Administrator

**Bill Oates**, Chief Information Officer

**Devin Quirk**, Citywide Performance Manager

**Bill Sinnott**, Corporation Counsel

**Jay Walsh**, Director of Neighborhood Services

**Meredith Weenick**, Collector Treasurer

## Appeals Board:

**Trina Ambrose**, Reclaiming Our Community

**Patricia Flaherty**, Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services

**Greg Vasil**, Greater Boston Real Estate Board

## Staff Team:

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**Michael McCarthy**

**Bernard O’Rourke**

**Devin Quirk**

**Darryl Smith**

**David Tran**

**Jay Walsh**

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## Summary of Results

Strong vibrant neighborhoods are built around a perception of safety and vitality. Too often, the actions of a few bad actors greatly diminish the quality of life in Boston's neighborhoods through neglect or outright crime. To address these issues, Mayor Menino created the Problem Properties Task Force.

The Problem Properties Initiative is a coordinated, inter-departmental approach to identify and respond to properties where there are persistent criminal activities and violations of the State's sanitary and building codes. The Task Force is charged with cleaning up the City's most blighted and crime-ridden addresses by holding the owners of these properties responsible for their actions and inactions. In some cases, these addresses are known epicenters of drug use, prostitution, violence or other crimes. In other cases, they may be dilapidated visual blights that pose a safety

hazard for the community. In all cases, these property owners, whether through negligence or malfeasance, have allowed their properties to become chronic problems for the neighborhood.

**We are pleased to report that the efforts of the Problem Properties Task Force have been successful.** To date, the Task Force has investigated 144 properties and taken focused action against 18 of the City's worst problem properties. This effort has resulted in a **55% reduction in police calls for service** at these addresses and resolution of hundreds of sanitary or building code violations. Actions taken at these properties include everything from the arrest of problem tenants, to the installation of security cameras and fences, to reconstruction of dilapidated exteriors, to the removal of abandoned vehicles and other hazards. In all cases, the Task Force's efforts have been focused on improving the quality of life in these neighborhoods.

*"We will not allow problem properties to drag down the quality of life in our neighborhoods... Now, residents will have the full weight of the city and all of our resources on their side when it comes to absentee landlords who ignore their responsibility to their neighbors."*

*-Mayor Thomas Menino*

### Ordinance Overview

The idea behind the creation the Task Force draws from the "broken windows" theory of community disorder. For many decades, social scientists and public safety experts have noted that by focusing on seeming small quality of life issues, such as fixing broken windows, public trust is increased and public safety is in fact enhanced in stressed neighborhoods.

Recognizing that a few problem properties can have wide-spread adverse effects on the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life of residents in Boston's neighborhoods, the Mayor and City



Council established several new city ordinances to deal with problem properties.

On July 13th 2011, Mayor Menino signed an executive order establishing an advisory panel in the Mayor's Office known as the Problem Properties Task Force. This executive order established a requirement for monthly meetings of the Task Force and designated the following members: the Police Commissioner, the Fire Commissioner, the Commissioner of Inspectional Services, the Director of the Office of Neighborhood Services, the Commissioner of Public Health, the Collector-Treasurer, the Director of the Air Pollution Control Commission, and the Corporation Counsel. This Task Force was charged with the responsibility of identifying, recommending for designation and monitoring the City's worst problem properties. The Task Force was also given new regulatory powers through two new City ordinances.

The first new legislation, "An Ordinance to Eliminate Public Nuisance Precipitated by Problem Properties in the City" (City of Boston Code Chapter XVI), defines problem properties as any property that meets the following

criteria:

*"The Police Department has been called to the property not fewer than four times within the preceding 12 month period for any incident involving any criminal offense including but not limited to disturbing the peace, trespassing, underage drinking or assault; or 2, the Air Pollution Control Commission has received not fewer than four sustained complaints for noise within the preceding 12 month period; or 3, the Inspectional Services Department or the Public Health Commission have received not fewer than four sustained and upheld complaints within the preceding 12 month period for noxious, noisome or unsanitary conditions."*

The ordinance also directs the Chair of the Task Force (currently the Mayor's Chief of Policy and Planning) to exercise discretion in designating problem properties by taking into account the nature of the complaints and the property's use. In other words, while there may be many properties across the City which may meet the minimum definition of a problem property, the

### Addressed Designated as "Problem Properties" To Date:

- 102 Blue Hill Ave
- 108 Adams St.
- 30 Ridgewood
- 318 Blue Hill Ave
- 655 Warren St
- 34 Norton Street
- 9 Inwood Street
- 110 Greenbrier
- 100 Mount Pleasant Av
- 55 Quincy
- 38 Julian
- 19 Irma
- 114 Sawyer Ave
- 42 Gardner
- 27-37 Bakersfield
- 91 Devon
- 161 Intervale Street
- 20-22 Highgate Street

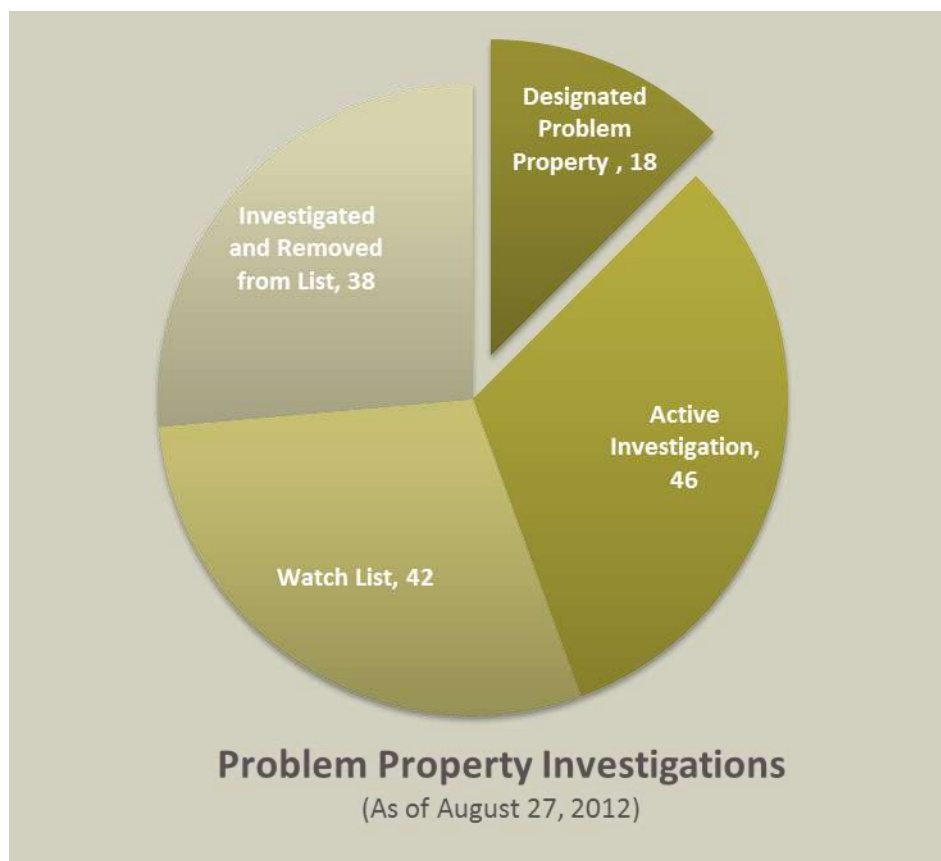




Task Force may choose to recommend for designation by the Chair only those properties which it deems are the most significant hazards or nuisances in the community.

This ordinance also establishes new penalties for designated problem properties, providing for fines of up to \$300 per day for each uncorrected citation under the State Sanitary Code or State Building Code. Additionally, should the owner of a property placed on the problem properties list not respond to the Problem Properties Task Force notification within sixty days, the ordinance authorizes the Inspectional Services Department to petition the Housing Court for the appointment of a receiver to rehabilitate that property.

The second new ordinance, "An Ordinance Regarding Penalties for Chronic Problem Properties" focuses on rectifying problems associated with properties that are chronic epicenters of crime. After four "Valid Complaint" incidents have occurred in a 12-month period at a particular property, the Chairman is authorized to list the property as a problem property. After 8 "Valid Complaint" incidents have occurred, the City is authorized to bill the property owner for the full cost of the police response to the property. This could include the cost of stationing a police assignment at the property to mitigate crime. Any unpaid bills are authorized to be added to



the tax bill for the property and subject to the penalties for unpaid taxes, including foreclosure.

### Results to Date

In the first 13 months of operation, the Task Force has investigated 144 properties, 18 of which have been designated as the city's worst problem properties and are subject to the enforcement mechanisms outlined in the ordinances discussed above. Another 46 properties are currently under active investigation to determine if they should be designated as problem properties. This list includes the investigations of properties owned by the same landlords as the 18 designated problem properties.

An initial review of the 18 designated properties revealed that police activity at these properties



has dropped 55% percent in the months following designation. For example, 34 Norton Street in Dorchester had been the site of 15 major police incidents including a triple shooting, a homicide, and multiple drug and gang issues. After designation, ISD inspected the property and secured an illegal basement apartment which was then referred to housing court to resolve. With the help of the police department, the problem tenants were evicted from the house. Furthermore, as a result of increased police presence, calls to this property have diminished to the point where no significant incidents have occurred at this property for several months.

Currently 42 properties are on the problem properties watch list, meaning that these properties were investigated and determined not to warrant designation as a problem property but should be actively monitored to ensure the problems at these properties do not evolve or reoccur. In some cases, these properties include places where the city took swift action to rectify the root cause of problems before a problem property designation could occur. For example, the Task Force investigated a vacant lot in Jamaica Plain which had become a major blight in the neighborhood accumulating over \$7,000 in code violations due to dumping, loose trash and a generally unkempt appearance. Upon contacting the owner, it was revealed that the owner had partnered with a negligent management company. The owner brought in a new management team and all issues were immediately resolved without the need for designation.

Additionally, the Task Force has investigated 38 properties where there was shown to be no cause for further action or attention from the Task Force. For example, the Task Force investigated a property in Dorchester which received a high volume of police calls for service. Upon further investigation it was revealed that this was the residence of a developmentally disabled person who was in need of social services. The case was referred to the Boston Public Health Commission so the person could receive proper care outside of the 911 system.

The next step for the Task Force is to consider recommending to the Chairman the removal of properties from the designated problem property list which have fully rectified all of the issues at the address. While a large number of these properties have already exhibited dramatic measurable improvements, the Task Force is committed to assessing all facts on each property before considering whether to recommend to the Chairman the removal of the property.

### **Innovative Technology**

A major driver of the success of the Problem Properties initiative has been the use of innovative new technology to focus cross-departmental efforts, share information, and leverage the large number of property-specific data sets maintained by the City. The City has developed a custom database which allows users from Police, Inspectional Services, Neighborhood Services, the Boston Housing Authority, the Law Department and the Mayor's Office to share information about each property





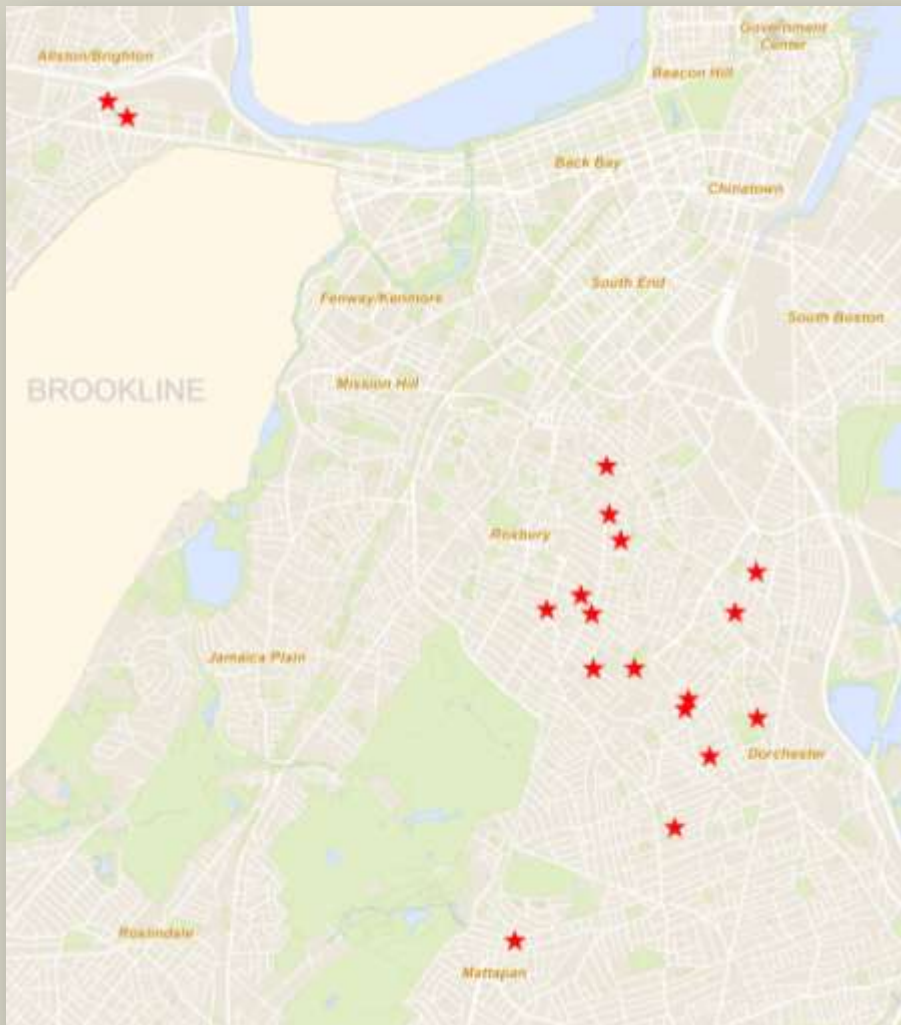
in real time. The tool ensures that each department has a complete and up-to-date record of the actions the City has taken at each property and ensures that the City is rapidly responding to issues as they arise.

Fundamentally, the Problem Properties Task Force is a cross-functional data-driven effort. Whether it is police records, citizen complaints, code violations, or tax records, the data is helping us identify the most egregious problem properties in the City. As we move into our second year, we hope to leverage these data sources to a greater extent. More importantly however, the data helps us determine what actions are necessary at properties, whether the

City's interventions are happening in a timely fashion and if these interventions are working. In our first year, the data tell us that the Task Force is making a difference in the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

## Actions Taken at Each Problem Property

The pages that follow outline the actions the City has taken at each of the 18 properties that were designated by the Task Force as the city's most egregious problem properties.



## Map of Designated Problem Properties

*The Map at left shows the locations of the 18 designated problem properties. On the following pages the detailed history of the issues and the City's response is discussed.*



### 34 Norton Street, Dorchester

*Owner:* Francisco Gomes

*Neighborhood Concerns:* 34 Norton Street was the site of a triple shooting resulting in one fatality on July 4th of 2011. Furthermore, no less than 10 shots fired incidents have occurred at this address since 2001. Violent incidents at 34 Norton St. appear to be targeting residents of the address and/or associates of these residents. Several residents at this address are verified gang members. The residence/address has been associated with multiple crimes related to firearm violence, domestic violence and drug activity.

*Date Designated:* 8/31/2011

*City Actions Taken:* After the July 4th homicide this property received a lot of police attention. C-11 utilized directed patrols at the property and in the area. C-11 CSO office worked with ISD to get the owner to address the code violations. CSO office maintained constant contact with the owner throughout the designation period.

ISD inspected the property and found the basement being used for illegal living space. Following inspection, the basement was vacated. In July 2012, the building inspector determined that there were still issues with the basement and swore the violation out to Housing Court.

A gang-involved youth who was a tenant at this location was referred to the Public Health Commission's Violence Intervention Program (VIP). He has since been working with VIP to return to school for a GED.

*The Result:* With the increased police activity around the house, calls to this property have diminished and problem tenants have been removed. No significant incidents have occurred at this property for several months.

A short form permit was issued on August 10, 2012 to return the basement to its original condition and use it for storage purposes only. Based on the issuance of the permit, it would be expected that the violation will be resolved after completion of the work. At that point, all violations on the property would be corrected and close. The Property Owner is due in Housing Court on 9/12/12 to show that these violations have been corrected.



### 30 Ridgewood, Dorchester

*Owner:* Rodrigue Guerrier

*Neighborhood Concerns:* 30 Ridgewood was a major concern for the neighborhood due to the blighted condition of the building, the status of the property as a poorly maintained rooming house, and tenants who were intimidating to neighbors. Prior to designation the property had 12 open code violations for trash and debris totaling \$2,768. Additionally, the Mayor's hotline had recorded 4 complaints to the housing division for unsatisfactory living conditions.

*Date Designated:* 8/31/2011

*City Actions Taken:* Many of the police calls to this property were disputes between tenants. Initial investigation showed this house to be a very poorly maintained rooming house. Several inspections took place at this property as a result of calls about trash storage and debris. Additionally, tenants made requests for inspections due to the living conditions inside the units. These calls resulted in inspections and violations being issued against the property owner. The BPD District Captain worked closely with owner and other city agencies to get owner to clean up property. The C-11 Drug Control Unit and the Special Investigations Unit were also involved at this address.

*The Result:* Due to the actions of all the city agencies involved this property has been cleaned up. The façade has been restored and repainted, and there have been no further complaints about trash at the property. All housing violations that were issued have also been corrected. The work of the C-11 Drug Control Unit and the Special Investigations Unit eliminated the problem tenants. Based on these successes the property is being removed from the problem properties list.



## 110 Greenbrier, Dorchester

*Owner:* Robert J. Avitabile

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Identified by the Boston Police Department as historically requiring substantially more BPD involvement compared to the surrounding area (over 23 police incidents in the 12 months leading up to designation). The property was operating as an illegal rooming house, had been issued over \$500 in fines for illegal dumping, and had a laundry list of housing code violations including missing interior doors, damaged exterior doors, missing carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, major holes in the interior walls, and unsafe exterior decks.

*Date Designated:* 8/31/11

*City Actions Taken:* ISD determined that the property owner had converted the residence illegally into a rooming house for 15 boarders. Additionally, there were several other violations of the building code which the owner was cited for including missing and non-working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and holes in the floors and walls. Owner was served with the violations, which provided the information necessary to correct the violations.

After designation, property owner met with the BPD District Captain to discuss remedies. C-11 CSO office worked closely with owner to correct issues with code violations and evicting problem tenants.

*The Result:* The owner was taken by ISD to Housing Court because the violations were not corrected in the time frame allowed. Once the case got to the housing court level, the owner pulled permits, did the necessary work and restored the property to a legal 3 family. All violations were corrected and the case was dismissed.

Since this property was designated, calls for police services have been reduced by over 2/3. Owner has continued to work with the BPD, ISD and Neighborhood Services to keep issues from recurring. Based on these successes the property is being removed from the problem properties list.





## 100 Mount Pleasant, Roxbury

*Owner:* Jeffry Lomba

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Community members and the police department identified this property as operating as a brothel which was renting out rooms by the hour. ISD and BPD moved decisively to have it shut down. The owner had previously allowed the property to operate as a brothel in the past as well. Upon inspection, over 33 code violations were found, which resulted in the condemnation of the building.

*Date Designated:* 10/25/2011

*City Actions Taken:* BPD along with ISD inspected the property and it was deemed unfit for human habitation and was boarded and secured by ISD. A condemnation hearing was held, which the property owner did not attend. Several residents of Mt Pleasant St attended to speak about the issues they faced having the property as an abutting residence.

ISD inspected the property in October of 2011. The building has remained secure since October 2011 & there have been no additional complaints

*The Result:* Since this property was designated, there have been only three calls for police service. The building has remained vacant & boarded, eliminating the brothel activity from the residential street. No additional complaints have been made regarding the property. In an effort to ensure that issues do not return, the Task Force has involved the Suffolk County District Attorney's office on this address. The Task Force is also seeking to pursue additional enforcement actions to clean up the boarded building.



## 9 Inwood Street, Dorchester

*Owner:* Bank Owned: US National

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Often complained about illegal rooming house, a large number of assaults and drug activity mostly related to tenants at the property. Property in poor condition with issues including improper storage of trash, overgrown weeds, shopping cart on property, damaged siding, roof and porch in disrepair.

*Date Designated:* 10/25/11

*City Actions Taken:* BPD identified this property as problem due to the calls for service volume and illegal drug activity happening at the property. Resourced were allocated to address the problem tenants. Drug investigations and arrests were made.

ISD inspected this and determined that the property was operating as an illegal rooming house and was unfit for human habitation. The property was vacated, boarded & secured by ISD.

*The Result:* Since designation, this property has transferred ownership. The condemnation has been lifted and it has been approved to once again house tenants. One unit is occupied, 2 are vacant. The criminal activity at this property has stopped. All violations have been corrected.



### 318 Blue Hill Avenue, Roxbury

*Owner:* Gerald Matthews

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Multiple code violations, illegal basement unit, report of drug use and sales, and a resident died suddenly at the property. B2 anti-Crime officers visited the location several times and found young teenagers hanging out during school hours in a vacant area. The Mayor's office received 34 complaints about the property mostly regarding unsatisfactory living conditions. Owner held an outstanding warrant in Housing Court for an illegal basement apartment. Concerns about this property from neighbors date back several years.

*Date Designated:* 10/25/2011

*City Actions Taken:* The BPD District Captain had anti-crime officers focus on youth at the property. The school police unit became involved to deal with truancy concerns and assist with getting the youths back into school. BPD continued to work with ISD on other violations, and the property was taken by the bank.

ISD conducted several inspections of this location. The basement unit was vacated and secured, in addition to two other units in the building. Once the bank became the owner steps were taken to correct some of the violations. There are still existing housing code violations which were issued to the new owner and will be re-inspected on 8-15-12. The building inspector will gain access to the location on that date as well to determine what violations still exist.

*The Result:* Since the property has been sold, the number of blight complaints has decreased. Criminal activity has also decreased since designation. This is still a work in progress as there are outstanding violations but the new owner appears to be willing to work with ISD to correct them.



## 102 Blue Hill Ave, Roxbury

*Owner:* Edward Franco

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Drug trafficking operating out of apartment, prostitution occurring in a vacant vehicle on the property, numerous assaults and batteries with a weapon, several verbal disputes, weapons violations, loitering complaints. Responsible for over 100 police calls for service within one year, one of the most frequently responded to residences in the City.

*Date Designated:* Initial Action 7/1/11 (official designation 10/25/11)

*City Actions Taken:* The BPD District Captain has worked with owner's representative to address the criminal issues. Directed patrols have been put in front of the property resulting in numerous field intelligence observations and warrant arrests of individuals outside the property. Captain worked to have problem tenants evicted from the property. Fences have been installed.

ISD cited owner for an illegal 3rd floor unit, as well as for rear fire escapes that were blocked with debris. The debris was removed which closed that violation. ISD has owner in court on the occupancy. Owner has stated they will not move forward w application to legalize as a 3 family.

*The Result:* Since designation, calls for service have diminished with only a few for suspects being stopped outside the property. BPD District B-2 continues to monitor and can report no significant issues at this time.

Owner has installed No Trespassing signs on the property, and installed a fence preventing access to the back yard from the street. No further complaints to Mayor's office. An outstanding code violation will remain until the owner removed the illegal 3<sup>rd</sup> unit in the building, but otherwise the problems at this location seem to be resolved.





## 655 Warren St, Roxbury

*Owner:* SIX-51-663 WARREN ST LLC

*Neighborhood Concerns:* A 24 hour store which has long been the epicenter of crime problems. This property the scene of several homicides in the past including one in March 2012. Allegations of gang members dealing drugs around the property resulted in police investigation and several people arrested for Drug Trafficking charges from the store – Search Warrant issued and officers also recovered a Firearm from the property. Mayor’s office also received complaints of outdated products throughout the store.

*Date Designated:* 10/25/2011

*City Actions Taken:* BPD District B-2 directed intense drug enforcement and significant community policing resources to this location. B-2 officers were very aggressive in enforcing quality of life matters at this location. BPD and ISD held a hearing/meeting to roll back the owners hours but determined the city, by law, could not roll back the hours because they were grandfathered into the code/law.

Despite these efforts, a homicide occurred in front of the store in late March. This prompted another ISD inspection in April 2012. The inspection resulted in closure of business. Hearing was held on 4-12-12. Permits were issued to replace hardware on the door and repair front store window and correct other issues.

The BPD District Captain had extensive meetings with owner due to lack of cooperation, a large electronic sign designating the property as a problem property placed in front of the business on the street. The owner received pressure from area businesses and began working police and ISD to change hours of operation.

*The Result:* After extensive meetings with the owner, the community and the City, the owner agreed to permanently legalize the hours of operation as 6am-12am. This would eliminate late night business which is when problems occurred in the past. No significant crime incidents have occurred at this property since April. Owner has offered BPD access to cameras at the property.

Store/Building faces possible foreclosure and several interested parties from the community are involved in negotiations regarding the future of the property. Property should remain on the list until 1) the hours have been officially changed 2) the store has operated under the new hours proven that problems have been eliminated and 3) the community agrees that a resolution has been achieved.



## 55 Quincy, Roxbury

*Owner:* Lan Mai Nguyen

*Neighborhood Concerns:* ISD received complaints from Boston Police Area B2 and the Holborn Gannet Gaston Betterment Association via Project Right that there were squatters inside the property. The property was littered with trash and had overgrown grass and weeds. Community suspected the property was being used for illegal activities. Property had 22 outstanding code enforcement violations as the result of 23 complaints into the Mayor's Office from the neighborhood. Hazardous waste was dumped on the property, and there was a deteriorated structure (barn) on the property that was unsecured. In July 2011 a \$900 fine was issued to US Bank for failure to register the property as vacant and failure to post local management company.

*Date Designated:* 10/25/2011

*City Actions Taken:* Boston Police notified ISD of the deplorable conditions at this property including the trash, overgrown grass, and the reports of squatters living at the property. BPD worked with ISD inspectors to gain access to the property. Although no criminal violations were found, BPD worked with ISD and neighborhood association to clean up property. ISD performed a full inspection in September 2011 resulting in the issuance of a large number of violations. The building was vacated by order of ISD and boarded and secured by Project Pride

*The Result:* The property was sold to new owners who pulled building permits and have since done all of the work necessary to restore the property to good condition. The building has been completely rehabbed and once again has tenants. All of the violations have been corrected and there have been no issues since. Based on these successes the property is being removed from the problem properties list.



### 38 Julian, Dorchester

*Owner:* Vu Cuong

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Significant crime issues. 11 Police Reports between January and October 2011, many of which involve drugs and guns. Drug warrants turned up drug issues. A loud party occurred which resulted in a stabbing. Trespassing and drug use also an issue. Arguments and intimidation incidents with neighbors. Complaints to Mayor's Office of 8 tenants living at this property continually being disruptive, threatening neighbors, causing property damage.

*Date Designated:* 12/21/2011

*City Actions Taken:* District Captain has directed many police resources to this property. Captain worked with owner to get problem tenants evicted. One problem tenant was evicted successfully while a second has managed to avoid eviction at this time. BPD continues to monitor.

*The Result:* Crime issues have significantly dropped since designation. One problem tenant has been evicted and a second tenant is on notice to change his behavior. BPD will continue to monitor.



## 19 Irma, Dorchester

*Owner:* Jeffery Abrams

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Crime issues include: assault on police officer, possession of firearm, assault and batteries, and verbal disputes. A possession of a firearm incident occurred at this address which resulted in a significant drug seizure resulting in a large quantity of crack cocaine recovered and two loaded firearms as well. Complaints to Mayor's Hotline include unsatisfactory living condition complaints and graffiti issues.

*Date Designated:* 1/9/2012

*City Actions Taken:* Since the 2010 homicide out front, BPD District B-3 has directed police resources to this property. Aggressive enforcement of the drug laws has resulted in numerous arrests and warrants being served. B-3 officers have also made firearm arrests at this property. Captain has teamed up with ISD to address the many violations at the property.

ISD initially had trouble gaining access to inspect units in this building. After finally connecting with the owner, access was made. Housing violations were written. There is one outstanding violation in court, with a court data schedule for 8/28/12.

*The Result:* Since being designated, the owner has worked with ISD and BPD to correct violations. BPD and ISD working together to get owner to comply with the corrective actions required. Owner has put up a no trespassing sign to assist police with enforcement. The owner sent a letter to all of the tenants in the building notifying them that they should behave in a respectable manner, obey the law, and unless they are tenants or tenants' immediate family, loitering is not allowed. No significant police issues remain.





## 114 Sawyer Ave, Dorchester

*Owner:* My Van Mnguyen

*Neighborhood Concerns:* 19 confirmed police incidents including drug arrests and gun arrests. Community concerns of drug issues captured by Mayor's hotline.

*Date Designated:* 3/13/2012

*City Actions Taken:* District Captain has directed resources to this property. Initially owner was not receptive to task force involvement but eventually moved to evict problem tenants. District Captain has maintained open communication with the owner throughout the process.

*The Result:* All problem tenants have been evicted and Captain reports no issues at this address. Calls for service to this property have diminished since the problem tenants have moved out.



## 42 Gardner, Allston/Brighton

*Owner:* Kevin Ryan

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Overcrowded student housing with 6 students living in basement apartment. Improper ownership posting, evidence of rodents in units, complaints that heating system was not in good working order, missing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, evidence of sewage leak.

*Date Designated:* 3/13/2012

*City Actions Taken:* BPD District D-14 has been very aggressive with maintaining quality of life at properties in this student housing area. Directed patrols have been implemented to address the party calls and nuisance calls surrounding these properties. Citations have been issued for loud party calls to occupants and owners. ISD inspected the property and issued violations. There were more than five students found to be living in the location. D-14 Community Service Office took complaints out in district court against the owner for keeping a disorderly house.

*The Result:* Since designation, evictions of problem tenants have taken place and there have been very few police calls to this property since. BPD District D-14 will continue to monitor the success given new students may be moving in in the coming weeks.

All of the housing violations have been corrected. Students have moved out for the summer, which closed the violation of more than 5 students. This property will be monitored as the new school year begins and new tenants move in.



## 108 Adams Street, Dorchester

*Owner:* Edward Franco

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Incidents range from drug overdoses to breaking and entering to warrant arrests and missing persons. Owner also owns 102 Blue Hill Avenue which was a previously listed problem property. The City was concerned that some problems at 102 Blue Hill Avenue may have shifted to this address.

*Date Designated:* 3/26/2012

*City Actions Taken:* Area C-11 directed numerous police resources to this address. Captain remained very aggressive with problem tenants and owner to clean up property and evict problem tenants. Code Enforcement issued several violations for an old lift on the property.

After designation, a large electronic sign board was placed in front of the property identifying it a Problem Property. Owners Attorney worked with C-11 to evict problem tenants. BPD worked with ISD to address other violations.

*The Result:* As of end of August, owner's attorney reports to District Captain that all problem tenants have been evicted. There have been no new police incidents at this address since March of this year and code enforcement complaints have been resolved. Property has been cleaned up.



## 27-37 Bakersfield, Dorchester

*Owner:* Wendy Rist

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Sober House operating without consistent oversight which has prompted a large number of concerns from the neighborhood. Drug dealing happening on the premises, multiple overdoses resulting in multiple deaths. Many family trouble calls and several removals. Several incidents at surrounding properties may be related to residents of this property. e.g. cars being broken into, housebreaks, street overdoses, etc. Overcrowding and code violations also of concern.

*Date Designated:* 5/1/2012

*City Actions Taken:* BPD has researched calls for service in the area surrounding this property. Data suggests an increase in crime/police calls in the area surrounding this address. BPD currently working with Suffolk County DA's office for possible criminal charges to be brought against the owner. C-11 has been monitoring the activity at this property and will direct resources accordingly.

The Police Department and Neighborhood Services have held two meetings with landlord and sober home operator. Owner installed exterior video cameras but there have been over a dozen incidents since the first meeting in May 2012 including drug arrest 8-8-12, two deaths (one fatal OD, one non-drug related) and a stabbing. A third meeting was held on 8/15/12 to review the installation of security cameras, and a VMS board was positioned outside on the property on 8/17/12 to identify the property as a problem property.

*The Result:* As of the writing of this report, although the landlord of 27-37 Bakersfield Street has been involved in at least three (3) meetings with the District Captain and Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, further incidents at the address have occurred since these meetings, and as such, the District Captain will be pursuing the criminal complaint. The Boston Police will file the complaint for a number of counts of "keeping a noisy and disorderly house" in accordance with M. G. L. c. 272, § 53(a).





## 91 Devon, Dorchester

<i>Owner:</i>	Annetta Dingle-Smith
<i>Neighborhood Concerns:</i>	A notorious party house in the neighborhood, including four recent calls for loud parties. Another incident involved a tenant accusing another tenant of pulling a knife (parties were intoxicated). One call was for a truck being vandalized outside the property. Complaints of abandoned pit-bulls in the backyard.
<i>Date Designated:</i>	7/25/2012
<i>City Actions Taken:</i>	District Captain is attempting to meet with the property owner. Owner has not yet contacted the Captain.
<i>The Result:</i>	Property was recently designated and remains a problem

## 161 Intervale Street, Roxbury

<i>Owner:</i>	Antonio Lepe
<i>Neighborhood Concerns:</i>	21 police incidents including multiple drug issues and a stabbing. B-2 drug unit executed multiple search warrants and recovered significant drugs and ammunition.
<i>Date Designated:</i>	7/25/2012
<i>City Actions Taken:</i>	Property owner has contacted the B-2 Captain and has met with the CSO office to discuss the issues at the property.
<i>The Result:</i>	Property was recently designated and remains a problem



## 20-22 Highgate Street, Allston/Brighton

*Owner:* Andrew Tuchler

*Neighborhood Concerns:* Often complained about student party location. 11 police incidents include three calls for fights outside the property. Three were for stolen property from rooms with-in the property. (Laptops, cameras, etc) One was car fire outside being investigated by BPD arson squad. One for a very large party 100+ kids with Mosh Pit and active Fire Pit. Owner was cited by BPD for graffiti on dumpster in driveway. One call for stolen scooter from property. 10 Code Enforcement fines for an outstanding total of \$4900. Violations are all in regards to the dumpster-graffitied, broken, out early, blocking pedestrian access, no management or ownership info posted in visible location

*Date Designated:* 7/25/2012

*City Actions Taken:* The owner's representative has reached out to the BPD District D-14 Captain and BPD Community Service Office. The community service officer has met with ISD and has ordered 8 of the 16 bedrooms closed.

ISD received complaint that the property was overcrowded. Building inspector gained access and determined there were 5 tenants in each unit and informed tenants that one person needed to move out in order to avoid a violation. Upon re-inspection, there were only 4 tenants in each unit so there is no violation.

*The Result:* Overcrowding issue has been resolved. BPD currently working with owner.

## Other Success Stories

While the work of the Task Force has largely been focused on the most severe problem properties in the City, during the course of this work we have also been able to identify and resolve many issues which did not lead to a problem property designation. Below are several examples:

- 101 Brookley Street, Jamaica Plain:** After a number of complaints from the neighborhood, the Task Force investigated this vacant lot in Jamaica Plain which had become a major blight in the neighborhood accumulating over \$7,000 in code violations due to dumping, loose trash and a generally unkempt appearance. Neighborhood services contacted the owner and determined that the owner had partnered with a negligent management company. The owner brought in a new management team and all issues were immediately resolved without the need for designation.



- **143 Grew Street, Roslindale:** The house was the site of numerous noise complaints and complaints to Police from neighbors. A party in early January resulted in a stabbing. As a result, the Police Department contacted the owner who took quick action to rectify the issues. A single problem tenant was identified and subsequently evicted in February. There have been no reported problems since.
- **99 Blue Hill Ave, Roxbury:** This property was the site of numerous concerns from the neighborhood. It was cited by ISD in Dec 2010 for changing occupancy from a 2 family to a 1 family with an illegal rooming house on 2nd floor. After learning that the property might become a target of the problem properties task force, the owner took swift action to remove the illegal rooming house. Crime issues at this property have diminished greatly since the landlord took action.
- **181 Bowdoin:** Deteriorated vacant lot with over \$6,500 in outstanding code violations. Neighborhood Services and ISD contacted the owner who promptly responded by removing all abandon vehicles, clearing the lot of overgrowth, removing trash and debris, and installing a new fence. All code violations were resolved and there have been no further complaints from the neighborhood.
- **A property on the 300 block of Market Street, Brighton:** This property was the site of over 85 police calls for service during 2011. However, upon investigation from the task force, it was discovered that the source of many of these calls was a person at the address who was in need of additional services. The case was also referred to the Boston Public Health Commission to assess if there were services and support that could be offered. At BPHC's direction Boston EMS completed a review of their activity at this address from January 1, 2012 to August 16th 2012. Boston EMS reports 37 calls to EMS for assistance during this time frame from 9 different people living in the building. On three occasions BEMS was cancelled before they arrived. The breakdown of the remaining 34 EMS calls was the following: Six individual patients accounted for a single response each. One patient, a middle aged male with a medical condition accounted for 4 responses. Another middle-aged male patient accounted for 3 responses. One middle aged female patient accounted for 22 responses; almost every instance resulted in a transport to a nearby hospital. This patient is already connected to visiting nurse services. The Medical Director of Boston EMS working with the patient and her primary care physician to see if a change in the patient's management might result in less need for 911 emergency services.



## Continuous Improvement

While the Problem Properties Task Force is proud of the improvements the City has been able to make in addressing quality of life issues in our neighborhoods, we steadfastly believe there is much more work ahead of us. In the next year, the Task Force will work to make an even greater impact in our community. In order to do so, the Task Force plans to focus on the following identified issues:

- **Expanding Task Force Capacity:** while the task force was able to investigate 144 properties in its first year and intervene at 18 of the City's most severe problem properties, we know there are many more problems out there. In the Task Force's second year, part of our challenge will be expanding our efforts to cover more properties and make a larger impact. We hope to achieve this through better analytical tools for identifying problems, better coordination across departments, and the continued cooperation of the community.
- **Using the full range enforcement mechanisms outlined in City ordinance:** The new ordinances passed by the Mayor and the City Council give the City the power to levy severe financial penalties against absentee landlords at designated properties. To date these penalties have not been used. This largely reflects the City's successful ability to bring owners of designated problem properties to the table to resolve issues. Additionally, these financial penalties are so severe that the mere threat of using them has been enough to compel action in recalcitrant owners. However, in the next year, the City should continue to consider

recommending the use of these penalties and not hesitate to use them in cases where it will make a meaningful difference in quality of life in the neighborhood.

- **Communicating the role of the Task Force to field-level staff:** as with any new initiative, a challenge of the Problem Properties Task Force has been ensuring that field-level staff, particularly in BPD and ISD, are aware of the Task Force and how it may help them resolve issues in the neighborhoods for which they are responsible. In our second year we will work to further educate these front line employees, so that they can incorporate the options the Task Force provides into their day-to-day work.
- **Improved Data Mining:** The Task Force relies on two sources to identify problem properties: 1) reports from the community and City employees and 2) widespread data mining of city data sets. In the second year, the Task Force should improve its capacity for data mining in order to more comprehensively identify problems which may not be reported.
- **Predictive Analytics:** In its second year, the Task Force hopes to engage in a predictive analytics effort to use the data we have gathered about problem properties to identify those risk factors which might cause problems to arise. Using this analysis we hope to be able to predict where problems might occur in the future and deploy City resources to these locations to prevent blight or crime from occurring. We have begun conversations with research partners and local academics who may help us



achieve this goal. After all, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

- **Outreach and education:** As the Problem Properties Task Force continues to examine problematic properties within Boston's neighborhoods, we will continue to share our expertise and educate surrounding cities and towns on implementation of similar Task Forces in their own jurisdictions. Recognizing that problem properties are nation-wide, the Problem Properties Task Force in Boston is in a unique position to share the success of our model with these neighboring municipalities. The Task Force has already hosted the Cities of Somerville and New Bedford and the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office.

## More Information

For the latest information on the Problem Properties Task Force, or to read the City ordinances which govern its effort please visit:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/mayor/problemproperties/>

For questions or to report a problem property in your neighborhood, please contact the Mayor's Office at:

617-635-4500

or

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/mayor/24/>